

Miracle
On Briarwood Road

The Story and History of
Northside Alcoholics Benevolent Association
1957 – 1977

DEDICATION

The men and women who have rehabilitated themselves through the facilities afforded by the Northside Alcoholics Benevolent Association take pleasure in dedicating this story of its history to:

A.B. Padgett;

J. Arch Avary; and

Roy D. Warren

for their continuous efforts and guidance in our behalf over the past twenty years. The men and women of NABA are, and those to come in the years ahead will be, profoundly grateful.

FOREWORD

Man's humanity to man is of sufficient significance as to literally mean, in any cases, the difference between life and death.

This story portrays the continuing role of NABA in its small part of life's drama.

The years go by faster than we realize and important events that have affected our lives can become vague, distorted or completely forgotten with time. Of those who belong to NABA, only a few remain who have been actively involved up to the present time (1977). Thus, it becomes most important that there be no further delay in the telling of the story of its development.

Hopefully, this story and history illustrates that its success through these twenty years has been primarily due to its rigid adherence to NABA's basic simple principles. It is hoped that NABA's future leaders will hold to this course which has guided so many to a useful and happy life.

It attempts to show the hard work and sacrifices of many members through these years – their persistence and determination in overcoming seemingly insurmountable odds so many times. How indebted we are to so many interested Atlanta citizens, foundations, corporations, and businessmen, and how important it is to keep our own house in order and maintain their valued confidence.

Our day-to-day strength and growth is dependent on the dedication of NABA's entire membership and not with its officers and directors alone.

And last and above all, our Higher Power has been with us throughout these twenty years.

In the 1950's, there were very few registered autonomous AA groups in metropolitan Atlanta. Prior to this time there was only one central group which had, over the past few years, met in various locations, each of which was inaccessible to many alcoholics living in the outlying areas. The last location of this central group was at 522 West Peachtree, and it had grown to be rather large in numbers. It became cumbersome and hard to manage and operate effectively, and with so many people, became quite impersonal. One of the first autonomous groups that emerged from this central group was what became known as the original Buckhead group. Their meeting place was at the Garden Hills Women's Club on Rumson Road and they met twice a week – on Wednesday and Sunday. This was a relatively small and compact group of men and women who came to know each other very well personally. On many occasions this group visited with each other in their homes but of course these visits always resulted in discussions about the illness of alcoholism.

Frequently during these visits various recovering alcoholics in their early stages commented on their difficulties in curbing the compulsion to take a drink during the days and nights when they were not attending meetings. Bear in mind that most groups at this time met only once a week in someone's home, or a room in a church, or other public building for one hour. Many of us had known alcoholics who were trying to recover but who were not about to cope with the compulsion to take a drink during the periods from one meeting time to another. From time to time a few of the members of this group discussed the question of what would be an effective method of filling this void which was so critical to any alcoholic, particularly in the early days of his recovery. It was realized that if some location were established to fill this void between meetings it would have to be thought out very carefully. There were those who were quite skeptical about such a creation for fear that it might emerge into something detrimental and not in keeping with AA's 12 Traditions.

The more this idea was discussed, the vast majority felt that it would be effective and so we decided to start planning and give it a try. Above all, we knew that the essential effort should be directed toward creating something that would be run properly and not become a hang-out. There were many things to be decided such as: where it would be located, creating a charter, giving it a name, how it would be supported financially, and of course, many other problems. In order to do this several committees were formed, with their various responsibilities. It was decided that we would seek a location somewhere in the north, northeast or northwest portion of metropolitan Atlanta, simply because the majority of the members of this group were located in that area, but not all. We also visualized at this early stage of the game that if this idea proved to be successful it was hopeful and proper that other entities be established in other appropriate geographical areas of metropolitan Atlanta. With the help of a sympathetic attorney our charter was drawn, granted and registered with the Secretary of the State of Georgia December 1957, under the name of Northside Alcoholics Benevolent Association. This was our first accomplishment. From the very beginning it became known as NABA and still is.

In the early stages of our discussions of establishing NABA it had to be done in a way that would not violate any of the 12 Traditions, therefore, a corporation had to be established, separate and apart from AA, but with its officers and Board of Directors being AA people operating without remuneration. At the time our charter was granted our charter members were made up of 20 men and women. As of this writing [in 1977] there are only 7 left and of the remaining 13 a few have moved to other locations and the remainder have passed away.

The next order of business was to draw up a set of bylaws and we all knew that this was a very important part of making NABA a successful operating corporation. We knew that in other parts of the country there were a good many cities that had established so-called clubs that operated in various fashions. We had met over a period of time a few members of such clubs and inquired as to how they operated, their successes and failures. We made notes of these and studied the situation very carefully. A few of our members made visits to various clubs in different cities and talked with their management at length and obtained copies of their bylaws. These people were very frank to inform us of their successes and mistakes they had made and this information has been most valuable to us in establishing our bylaws. From the information that came to us we could readily see that those who were not successful did not maintain rigid management and gambling in many forms was permitted. Gambling has never been permitted in the NABA Club.

It is interesting to note that over the past 20 years only one minor change has been made in the NABA bylaws. Our housing committee had been busy searching various parts of the city to house our operations. It was rather quickly determined that particularly from an economic standpoint our best bet was to find vacant residence. We finally settled on a residence located at 2521 Peachtree Road, N.E., just a little south of St. Philip's Cathedral. This was a 2-story brick and frame home, with the first floor consisting of living room, dining room, den and kitchen while the upstairs contained three bedrooms. A year's lease was signed and NABA officially occupied its first location in March, 1958. Of course, the house was bare...we had no furniture...but it was exciting that we had reached this far in our efforts to establish what we felt would be a very effective tool for the use of many men and women in acquiring and maintaining their sobriety.

Entering into a thing of this kind, with all of its implied responsibilities and commitments, the average businessman would certainly feel that we were "nuts. On the other hand, the average businessman would not recognize or know anything about the ingenuity of alcoholics and their determination to accomplish what they set out to do. Anyone could see that we were operating by the "seat of our pants," and as a matter of fact, after twenty years we are still doing it and have a very successful operation. This is illustrated by the fact that after easing this property the wives of alcoholics and the women alcoholics swarmed over this property with paint brushes, scrub brushes, brought in furniture, carpeting, curtains, chairs and many, many other things that were needed to set the wheels in motion.

It is timely to mention at this point that in establishing this type of facility the availability of food and certainly plenty of coffee was essential. A sympathetic appliance owner made available to us a used commercial stove. We also acquired a good-sized refrigerator and a freezer. The ladies really took charge of the kitchen situation. They divided themselves into shifts as far as kitchen responsibilities were concerned, throughout each day and evening. In very short order food was being served and it was very good. What food was not cooked in our kitchen was brought by the ladies, having been cooked in their homes.

It was necessary for us to acquire a caretaker – a person who could occupy the premises overnight and open and close the Club. One of our recovering male alcoholics volunteered for this service and one of the upstairs bedrooms was used for his housing requirements. To this day our caretakers are still recovering alcoholics; however, nowadays he has the sophisticated title of “resident manager.”

At the time we acquired our first home we had established a financial reserve of approximately \$1,000 all of which was accumulated from those men and women who felt NABA would be a fruitful facility for the recovering alcoholic. Naturally there would be continuing expenses each month and to take care of this we established membership dues of \$3.00 per month per member. One other requirement for membership was that each prospective member must have a period of continuous sobriety of 90 days. This period of time was later reduced to 30 days, and still is.

At this point in time [1957] our membership consisted of approximately 40 people, and of course, we knew that this would not meet our monthly expenses and provide for the unexpected expenses that normally arise. We were optimistic enough to feel sure that our membership would increase and that more money would be available. It was important, and still is important, that so-called dues for membership be set at an absolute minimum figure, bearing in mind that the majority of recovering alcoholics have lost practically everything. Remember that in establishing NABA the founders knew and realized that its facilities would not appeal to everyone but for those who visited NABA, liked what they saw, and welcomed the availability of a clean, well-run facility, should be willing to contribute \$3.00 per month in order to enable us to keep the doors open and the facility available for the still sick alcoholic and for those who were using it to maintain their sobriety. When you think more deeply about this particular point, you realize the fact that the monthly contribution is purely and simply a 12th step gesture. Another angle to consider is that whatever the monthly contribution might be, it is cheap at the price as compared to what we spent on alcohol in one day or one week. It was never the intent of NABA to create a surplus of money or profit, because we knew that if such did occur it would create many problems and ultimately destroy it.

From the time NABA occupied its first premises and to the present day, it has had financial crises of one kind or another. On each occasion the problem has been solved by the membership because everyone has put a high value on its therapy. During the latter part of 1958 NABA gradually grew its membership. It also had many

visitors, both local and from out of town. Many businessmen coming to Atlanta visited NABA and continued to make it their headquarters whenever they were in town. One provision in the NABA bylaws clearly states that it will not tolerate any conduct from anyone that might be detrimental to the Club or its members. This rule is still rigidly enforced because should we ever become lax in this respect, it could very well jeopardize someone's sobriety and the integrity of the principles we were trying to maintain.

Today there are many meetings held at the NABA Club each week. In the beginning however, the founders in establishing the basic principal purpose of the Club intentionally gave no consideration to the promotion of AA meetings. It was purely and simply a well-run facility where the recovering alcoholics could come and associate themselves their other alcoholics, other than the regular AA group meeting they attended once a week.

Bearing in mind that our residence had two vacant bedrooms on the second floor, it wasn't long before the Board of Directors was petitioned to establish two autonomous groups with their meeting place to be in each of the two bedrooms upstairs. This request was granted and these two groups were started and were successful.

In the general course of the Club's operation it rapidly took on a family atmosphere. The families of members frequently came to the Club, drank coffee, ate lunch, got better acquainted with each other and many close friendships developed. In view of this the management then created what came to be known as Thursday family night. A buffet dinner was served which was followed at eight o'clock by an open planned AA meeting, which had to be held in our living room in order to accommodate the crowd. The Thursday night gathering still exists today.

The NABA women members and wives of male members deserve a great deal of credit in the success of the club at this point in time. They created many activities arranged parties, lunches, etc., all of which further solidified the family atmosphere. Speaking of parties and entertainment you will be interested in one type that was created by the membership. It was an elaborate New Year's Eve party which was held every year through 1962. One big part of this party was the presentation of a play. One of our male members, who was very creative in this sort of thing, took charge and he selected the theme of each play. The performers were drawn from the name of a membership and their families. It was decided to keep the theme a secret. All participants agreed not to divulge the theme of the play. Each year they started practice at least three months prior to New Year's Eve and a lot of time and effort was spent whipping together this raw but enthusiastic talent. All AA members in metropolitan Atlanta were invited with their families and friends. On each occasion the attendance ranged from 250 to 300 people. As you can imagine there was a great deal of laughter and kidding at the performance of these now "professional performers".

To give you some idea of this play one theme was taken from the television series Bonanza - the stage setting and the western costumes were a sight to see and you can imagine the laughter at our portrayal of these

characters. What with the size of our membership today as compared with the small number in these early years the potential of our talent should be large. Why couldn't we recreate such an occasion again? Think about it.

During the latter part of 1958 and the first part of 1959, our membership was still gradually increasing and we were witnessing the rehabilitation of quite a few men and women who were taking advantage of the homely facilities at NABA which were appealing to them in that they had the place to go and be with other alcoholics every day of the week. There was a general feeling of optimism in the majority of our members that NABA was destined to grow and have a permanent place in the recovering alcoholism throughout metropolitan Atlanta. Over a period of weeks, the Board of Directors and officers began actively discussing the idea of eventually having a place of our own. Our president called a special membership meeting to present the Board's ideas for their approval. It was explained that the ultimate best solution would be to somehow be able to construct a building of our own with the facilities we felt were necessary to complete the fundamental objectives of the NABA Club. We would not rule out however the acquisition of a building already constructed or a large residence, both of which could be conducive to expansion. It was with understandable skepticism from some numbers, when you consider the fact that we had no reserves and had no idea at this point where the money would come from. The majority of the members, however, took the position that nothing would ever be accomplished and we would never know just what would develop unless we actually tried. This philosophy finally brought about unanimous approval from the membership to go ahead.

Little did we realize that it would take six and a half years to finalize our efforts. During this period the problems that were confronted seemed insurmountable but were resolved by the determination and cooperation of our membership and interested civic leaders in business and throughout metropolitan Atlanta. Consider the fact that here you have a group of ex-drunks small in number with no money and striking out in all directions to achieve what they thought was a worthwhile goal. The disappointments and roadblocks which we encountered along the way seemed endless and there were periods during the six and a half years when we just had to pause for a week or so and take stock and seek redirection

One of the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous is "First things first." We knew that whatever direction we sought in accomplishing the ultimate end as much money as was possible would be needed from our members themselves, certainly if we expected funding from interested citizens in metropolitan Atlanta. A special "NABA Building Fund" was set up and over period of several years our membership agreed to set aside as much money as they possibly could from week-to-week and month-to-month to build up this fund. The money was contributed by friends and relatives of NABA members and there were some nominal donations made by interested citizens. It should be clearly understood at this point that in seeking funds for NABA from whatever source, it was done by

representation of NABA itself, which is a corporation and not in the name of Alcoholics Anonymous. To do otherwise would be in direct violation of one of the principle traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Early in 1960 we became acquainted with Mr. Arch Avary, who is Executive Vice President of Trust Company of Georgia Associates. We knew Mr. Avary by reputation and particularly his interest in the rehabilitation of alcoholics. Later on Mr. Avary unfortunately was the victim cancer. He had surgery and recovered. As a result of this he spent many years traveling extensively to different parts of the country, addressing many civic groups in the prevention of cancer. This activity, plus many other civic contributions, made him the recipient of the "Atlanta's Guiding Light Award" which is made annually to Metropolitan Atlanta's outstanding citizen. Mr. Avary visited us at the NABA facilities for lunch several times. As a result, he became quite interested and was sold on the fact that the facilities and therapy that NABA offered the sick alcoholic was something worth pursuing.

He then directed us to Mr. Roy D. Warren who was Founder and Chairman of the Board of the Roy D. Warren Realty Company. One of our members called on Mr. Warren and he also became very interested after several visits to the NABA facilities. Among those attending was Mr. A.B. Padgett, who at that time was Executive Director of the Metropolitan Atlanta Foundation. From that point on these three men [Avary, Warren, and Padgett], through their dedication and efforts, were largely responsible for what we have today. A series of meetings were held at the NABA Club together with the NABA Building Committee to map out the strategy that we should pursue. Through the efforts of our advisors we assembled a group of key ministers in the general area [proximately to NABA] to attend a luncheon on our premises. The purpose of the luncheon was to acquaint these ministers with the entire concept of NABA, our plans for the future, and a source that was available to them when needed in their counseling of any member of their congregations concerning the problem of alcoholism. Later a similar meeting was held and we assembled a group of doctors, lawyers, and businessmen. Later on these meetings were to stand us in good stead. Bear in mind that during this time, members of our Building Committee were still seeking prospective locations for the erection of a building or residence or building already constructed that could serve our purpose. We ran into many disappointments in these areas as you can well imagine. For example, in locating desirable building sites we found several that would suit but in each case due to possible zoning problems it was necessary for us to canvass the residents of each area, explain who we were and what we wanted to do. But in each case the result was the same - the consensus property owners complimented us on what a fine group of people we were and what a fine work we were doing, but they requested that we find some other place in which to operate.

Bear in mind that during all of this activity involving many members we were also very busy operating the NABA Club, improving it in every way that we could and solving all of the normal problems that appeared from week-to-week. Our membership was gradually creeping upward and at the same time becoming more and more involved in 12th Step work. Many of the members, particularly those involved on the Building Committee, were

spending an unusual amount of each day doing the necessary things that were rapidly increasing in our goals for a home of our own. The men were encroaching on time from their jobs and their families - these sacrifices continued right on until the time our building was completed. The Building Fund to which our members were contributing was slowly increasing and at the same time there were some nominal contributions from the outside. The women of NABA were continuing to promote various functions at the Club, such as parties, luncheons, etc. all of which brought in additional funds which were divided between contributing toward the Building Fund and the operating expenses of the Club. At this point things began to happen.

One of the members of our Building Committee had a longtime business acquaintance and friend, the late W.C. "Bill" Lea. Mr. Lea was President of McDonough Construction Company which at that time dealt largely in the construction of commercial properties and apartments for sale or lease. Our member had lunch with Bill Lea one day and revealed to him what he was involved in the objectives of NABA, and what we were endeavoring to accomplish. Mr. Lea was a man who was most interested in civic affairs and particularly those involved in efforts to relieve human suffering. He visited our club several times and became more acquainted with their function and said he would do all he could to help us. About a month later, our member received a phone call from Mr. Lea. He showed us a tract of land on Briarwood Road which bordered the Peachtree Creek which had substantial frontage and was approximately 600 feet deep. Mr. Lea said he would make this property available to us at a price which later turned out to be less than half the going market value. At this point more than three years have passed since we entered into this project and the Building Fund that had been set up now paid dividends because we were able to take advantage of this attractive offer by Mr. Lea. The necessary papers were drawn up and the purchase was consummated. We were now property owners.

With this turn of events it was of course that we would build. Later on we would become concerned with the prospect of NABA itself holding title to a substantial building and real estate which would amount to a considerable value. We discussed this problem with our advisers Messrs. Padgett, Avary, and Warren and they recommended that we vest title in this property with the Metropolitan Foundation of Atlanta. This idea was taken up with the Board of Trustees of the Metropolitan Foundation [of Atlanta] and they agreed to accept title. Attorneys drew up a Trust Agreement in accepting this property, that in the future should anything happen to NABA to close its doors and become inoperative, the property would be liquidated by the Foundation and the proceeds from the liquidation would be directed by the Trustees towards the rehabilitation of those suffering from the illness of alcoholism.

In our efforts to secure funds for the construction of this building with outside interests we requested that the Metropolitan Foundation of Atlanta become the depository for such funds and they were glad to comply with

this request. What this meant was the prospective donors would have substantial assurance that their funds and the property were in good hands.

A few months prior to the Metropolitan Foundation [of Atlanta] transaction one of our Building Committee members contacted the Internal Revenue Service in an effort to obtain tax-exempt status for NABA. This was a very arduous effort in that it took approximately six weeks through a number of meetings with the manager of the local office to fully comprehend the operations of this unique corporation. An interesting sidelight is that on the day of our final meeting at which time they granted the exempt status, the managers escorted our member to a private room and revealed that he had a very close relative who had a problem with alcohol. How often have we run into this situation?

With the present status of things our efforts to seek funding for our building increased considerably. Prospective donors were now much more receptive to our situation and we began to receive well needed funds. Simultaneously it was necessary for us to think about the design for the type of building we wanted to. One of our Building Committee members was acquainted with the architectural firm, Wise, Simpson, Aiken & Associates. They were contacted and this firm became very much interested in our project and agreed to help us. We didn't know it at the time but it later developed that when the building was finally completed they made no charge for their services. Obviously this was a significant dollar savings to us and NABA is very much indebted to this architectural firm. The plans for the building were revised several times and we finally arrived at what we wanted. Naturally we had to give close consideration to economic factors. We had an isometric rendering made of the finished building and this was superimposed on a pamphlet that we designed which outlined the important functions of NABA so that it could be presented to prospective donors. This turned out to be a very effective instrument.

Quite naturally, we asked McDonough Construction Company to be the contractor for our building. It later developed that Mr. Lea constructed this building for at actual cost. Through the efforts of our advisers, Messrs. Padgett, Avary and Warren, we were able to obtain a construction loan and were now ready to begin.

We were now in the early fall of 1964. We have now gone through a little better than five years of effort and at this point it was quite difficult for us to believe what was happening. Many words of thanks were given to those who had helped us so much. More importantly, there are many prayers to God for strength and guidance with the remainder of the way.

The winter of 1964 and early 1965 were severe, in that there was considerable rain and our construction progress was very slow, particularly in the stages prior to the time of the building could be closed in and work could be done from the inside. In addition to this, construction costs have been rising rapidly and this caused us

considerable concern. One of the superintendent of McDonough Construction Company who guided the work on our property was Mr. Dewey Woods, who later became Vice President of the company. Mr. Woods was a very understanding and compassionate man and he quickly picked up the concept of NABA and a friendship was established with many of us which still continues today. He went far beyond the normal function of the run-of-the-mill building superintendent, whereby he contacted many of his friends who were suppliers of various types of building materials and equipment to grant us as much as much discount as possible, or outright gifts of supplies. He was not asked to do this...he did it entirely on his own because of his sincere interest in what we were doing. He gave considerable thought to cutting as many corners as practical in keeping the good construction which also saved money and time. The Building Committee requested that Mr. Woods furnish us with a list of materials and equipment that were required from time to time and various NABA members took these lists and we all fanned out and made contact with acquaintances of ours to obtain as many supplies as possible with outright grants or discounts. We coordinated this effort with what Mr. Woods was doing on his own so that there would be no conflict. It turned out that this combined effort was quite successful.

Work of this kind was very slow and tedious. It required a lot of patience and tolerance on the part of each individual. It was necessary in practically all cases to go to the top management of each company furnishing building supplies in order to get the approval for a discount or grant. In most cases it took several visits...luncheon engagements and the delay in making appointments.

It was well it is well to mention here that in the very beginning of our efforts to have a home of our own it was necessary for many of us to break our anonymity in seeking help and assistance from corporations, businessman, building suppliers, and all other sources. This was not very palatable to most of us as you can well imagine. But we realized, for the most part, the men we were dealing with were a very high-caliber type and that they would respect our anonymity without our asking them to do. As a matter of fact, in many cases, it enhanced our position and status with this type of individual.

At this stage of the construction it was necessary for us to start thinking ahead and seek sources to furnish our new home. We set our sights on putting furniture in the new home that was attractive and hopefully as new as possible. In surveying what we had at our rented residence home there was only a few pieces that we felt could appropriately be used in keeping with this thinking. We were able to maintain a very substantial discount for dining room chairs and tables from an east Atlanta manufacturer. Complete furnishings from our reception room were obtained from another local manufacturer. A local kitchen supply house furnished us with a used commercial stove and other necessary equipment for a new kitchen. Sufficient chairs for our meeting rooms and our main assembly rooms were necessary. Even though this equipment was obtained for discounted prices it still added up to significant money in our eyes, particularly in view of what we were having to expend for the building itself.

It is interesting to know that a very large portion of this money was furnished by our members through consistent weekly and monthly contributions to the Building Fund.

The cost of living in of doing business had naturally affected NABA, just as everything else did. We had mentioned that in the beginning of NABA are voluntary monthly contribution per membership was \$3. From then until this point in time in our career it had been necessary to increase it twice so that the voluntary contribution for membership is now \$10 [1977]. This was absolutely necessary in order for us to keep our doors open for the person seeking help. We had always endeavored to keep this factor at a]n absolute minimum with never any idea in mind of creating a profit. Whatever this figure amounts to in future years it will always be cheap at the price when you consider what the operating alcoholic spends for whiskey, wine, etc. per month.

As has been mentioned before, never let it be forgotten that this monthly contribution is pure and simple 12th Step work in that we are helping the sick alcoholic through the existence and maintenance of NABA.

We were now approaching the spring of 1965. The tempo of construction was now increasing after very slow progress during the inclement preceding winter. We were continuing to receive many nominal cash contributions from individuals and corporations, but even at this point we could see that to meet the final cost of the building and pay off the construction loan was highly questionable.

Through the beginning and able assistance and leadership of our advisor Messrs. Padgett, Avary and Warren, we petition one of the larger local foundations for a grant of \$50,000. This foundation started an immediate investigation of the NABA Club by their Executive Director. Through this process, the Executive Director was able to assemble pertinent information about [NABA], the petitioner, to present at the quarterly meeting of their Board of Trustees and make a recommendation for acceptance or rejection. This investigation was very thorough and involved several visits to the NABA Club and with meeting of our leadership. This entailed several weeks before completion.

At this particular point the construction the building was approximately 90% complete and our contractor McDonough Construction Company was able to predict that the final cost of the building would be about \$87,000. This figure took into consideration the then existing building materials and equipment that had been made available to us through outright gifts or discounts.

Also at this point, the total amount of money that had been accumulated through local businessmen and corporations plus the contributions of NABA's membership to the Building Fund amounted to \$42,000. We are now in an unenviable position of having to acquire an additional sum of \$45,000 in order to pay off the

construction loan and own the property free and clear. We knew from the beginning that this would be a long hard road and as you have seen we had overcome many disappointments and setbacks. But to have reached this point, as far as we were concerned, miracles had been performed through the help of our Higher Power. It was quite staggering not to know just where this additional \$45,000 was coming from and to be quite truthful we needed another miracle. Sure enough it came, because within a week and 10 days we received official word that the foundation that we had petitioned had made us a grant of \$20,000. There were three principal conditions under this grant. The first was that the grant was to be the last \$20,000 that was owed to the contractor. Secondly, that when it was paid there should be no encumbrances of any kind on the property. In other words, we would need certification from the contractor that \$20,000 would clear all indebtedness to his suppliers. Thirdly, that the grant must be claimed under the foregoing conditions within a period of six months or the grant would be withdrawn.

The Building Committee then met with our advisers to seek a method of acquiring the remaining \$25,000, in order to comply with the grant conditions. It was decided to put this problem before the entire membership. We had a loan agreement drawn up and presented it to the membership. We asked that those members who were financially able, sign the loan agreement to the bank and with the specific amount of money that they would be responsible for opposite their name. When this was completed the total commitment amounted to \$32,000, whereas we were only seeking \$25,000.

Following the recommendation of our advisers, we took this loan agreement to the Trust Company Bank and presented our case. Our advisers accompanied us at this presentation and the result was that within a few days the Loan Agreement was accepted.

There is no question in our minds that the backing and the prestige of our advisers in the community was a major factor in having this loan granted and the terms and conditions of the loan were most favorable.

It is proper to say at this point that throughout the existence of NABA, Trust Company Bank has played a significant role. The principal officers of the Trust Company Bank had become familiar with NABA and the purposes of its operation. As a matter of fact, one of the junior officers who considered our \$25,000 loan request was Mr. Brad Currey, who later became one of the senior officers of the bank.

By the end of July, 1965 our building was entirely complete. The month of August we spent moving in furniture, getting the kitchen in operation, while the women members of NABA did a wonderful job of decorating the entire premises, curtains, draperies, flowers, etc. There were additional meetings established in our expanded headquarters and Thursday night continued to be family night where a large crowd always attended for dinner and meeting later.

The original estimated cost by McDonough Construction Company for the building itself was \$125,000. The true market value of the land was approximately \$25,000 so we ended up with a building and land at a total of \$150,000.

When we started out on this project it was probably a blessing that we didn't know that this kind of money would be involved because with our situation at that point in time this would have seemed an insurmountable effort. Perhaps the saying "What you don't know won't hurt you" was advantageous to us.

On September 9th, 1965 we held dedication ceremonies for our new home. A plaque was unveiled which bears the slogan, "That Others May Live". This plaque now rests on the wall at the main entrance of NABA under the portico.

From this point on we began to have many more visitors to the Club. Many people from out of town came to see us and those who are familiar with so-called clubs throughout other parts of the country felt it was the finest they had yet seen.

Our membership at this time approximated 90 members. When we speak of the number of members at any one time it is really measured in the total number of reliable dues-paying members. NABA has always carried on its membership rolls men and women who have taken advantage of NABA's facilities, but who are financially unable to pay dues. It should be realized that when an alcoholic first comes to AA for help that the vast majority have long since lost their jobs and have no financial resources whatsoever. It takes time for them to re-establish themselves in the community and be re-employed.

It should also be pointed out that throughout NABA's existence there have been those who have come to NABA with really no intention of rehabilitating themselves and attempted to use our facilities as a hangout. Under NABA's bylaws this will not be tolerated since it is detrimental to NABA and its membership.

Our new home encompassed 4,800 square feet and as a result we were exposed to a continuous maintenance and cleaning problem. The utility expenses were naturally higher. In meeting our obligations from month to month, our officers, Board of Directors, and various committees were very demanding. It was nip-and-tuck meetings expenses from month to month and many times we came up short. As in the beginning these shortages were always meant by the membership. Meeting the obligations of our \$25,000 loan from the Trust Company added to our financial stress. NABA has never attempted to promote itself through advertising, publications, etc. in the community but its reputation and what it was doing was steadily becoming known throughout metropolitan Atlanta.

Over the years many prominent writers of the Atlanta newspapers have written articles on NABA entirely on their own all of which were very complimentary. Also businessmen and corporations in the community who originally contributed to our building efforts have on their own sent in nominal contributions from time to time. These have been most appreciated and welcome.

The passing of the next five years, the cost of living and doing business had gone up tremendously. NABA was having increasing pressures in maintaining our monthly obligations, particularly in meeting the payments on the loan to the Trust Company Bank. We decided to do something about this problem and called a special membership meeting stop the financial picture was presented showing what we had paid into the bank including the amount of interest. We showed that in order to clear this loan we would need between \$13,000 and \$14,000 and that the payment of this loan would considerably ease the financial burden of NABA. Each member was asked to assess his own financial situation carefully and volunteer as much money as possible to meet this problem. Our advisers attended this meeting and they too went to work with their resources in the Atlanta community to contribute toward clearing the loan.

In February of 1971 contributions had steadily come in and we finally received the amount of money needed. The loan was paid off. We again extended our thanks to the Trust Company Bank for their leniency throughout the life of this loan and for their confidence in us and our ability to pay. It is quite significant that in acquiring the money to retire the notes 75% of the amount needed was contributed by the NABA members. The remainder came from interested people in metropolitan Atlanta through the help of our advisers. So you see miracles continued to happen and our Higher Power was still behind us.

In March of 1971 we held a special "note burning party" to celebrate the payment of the loan and the ownership of the property free and clear. It was a gala event with members, their families and guess attending for dinner, the note burning and a dance following. Our entire building was extremely crowded. Parking space was at a premium.

Our growth since 1965 was gradually taxing our facilities to the limit. The load on our kitchen requirements and the food served was beyond its normal capacity. Within 24 hours after the note burning party and unusual and unexpected event took place. The NABA member who'd been chairman of the Building Committee on our new home was approached separately by Mr. A.B. Padgett and Mr. Arch Avary, each of whom had attended our note burning party with their wives. It is important and unusual to note that these gentlemen had not conferred with each other at all, but each had the same idea in talking with our member. The message from each was essentially the same. There was no question in their minds that NABA had proven itself and was destined for greater things in the future, but that expansion was needed. They recommended that we get together

with management and take our time in deciding what expansion was needed and exactly what we wished to accomplish

They recommended that when this was done that we have an architect confer with us and design the building. They said that as far as the cost of the building was concerned they would assume the major responsibility. They felt confident of raising the necessary funds because of NABA's success in the rehabilitation of many, many alcoholics and the reuniting of many families...also because of the performance of its management and membership in their own monetary contributions and hard work. This offer was transmitted to our Board of Directors at a specially called meeting and it must be said that the effect was quite bewildering to everyone.

For a thing of this kind to come so suddenly it was difficult to comprehend such an offer. It was talked about with a lot of enthusiasm, but it was a matter of a few months before we could really begin to assemble our thoughts objectively.

A special membership meeting was called and the project was presented to them for approval. The impact of such a project and offer was just as bewildering to the membership as it was to the Board of Directors. At this point in our thinking, it was unanimously felt that we should be most carefully in such an expansion, that we not become unwieldy, that we create something that was not properly controlled by management. We knew that we wanted to create more meeting rooms for AA groups. We needed a sizable auditorium type area for large consolidated meetings and social events. It was vital that we increased the size of our kitchen facilities so as to better meet the demand that had steadily increased, additional restrooms on each floor, and major expansion of our parking facilities. Over the past years few years there had been an increasing number of young people with severe drinking problems who came who were coming to AA. Our present facilities were inadequate to take care of them. They had to hold makeshift meetings in our reception area. We wanted to provide adequate space for them and create activities that would be beneficial in their rehabilitation.

At this point in our thinking we had no idea of what square foot area we would have to create for these needs. At the same time, we had no idea as to what the increased maintenance costs would be for such an expansion. On this point it should be remembered that when we planned the expansion of the original building the cost of maintenance and operation was an unknown quantity. We had to approach this expansion with the same philosophy that if we wanted it bad enough we could take care of it.

Again, we turned to the architectural firm of Wise, Simpson, Aiken & Associates to design our building and create the working drawings for the contractor, which they agreed to do. As for the contractor, it was perfectly natural for us to turn to McDonough Construction Company that had done such a great job on the original building and helped us financially in so many ways. They again accepted this responsibility but we made

it clear to Mr. Woods that this time we expected them to make a reasonable profit as opposed to doing the entire original job at an absolute cost figure. It was decided that between the collaboration of the contractor and architect, the best direction for the building to go was toward Peachtree Creek so that we would not jeopardize the crucial parking facilities that were needed, together with obtaining the square foot area that was needed for the facilities that would be required in the building. Considerable engineering know-how went into this thinking and unusually large footings would have to be dug in order to support the two levels that would extend toward the creek. They knew that at times Peachtree Creek flooded and the water came above the footings and it was vital that no settling took place.

As on the original building, the interior design had to be adjusted several times. It was found that considerable renovation and redesigning of parts of the original building on both floors was necessary to coincide with what was planned on the new building.

Our contractor applied to DeKalb County for a building permit but it turned out that after their inspection of the property and reviewing the plans they required that the parking area be substantially expanded before a permit could be issued. This presented an immediate problem which had to be solved without delay. The cost for the required parking lot expansion turned out to be \$18,000. Primarily through the efforts of Mr. Padgett, three grants of \$5,000 each we received from local foundations and the remaining \$3,000 was raised by NABA's membership. It should be stated here that back in 1967 Mr. Padgett accepted a position with the Trust Company Bank in their Trust Department. You will recall that he had formerly been employed by the Metropolitan Foundation of Atlanta as Executive Director. It was a relatively short time in his tenure with the Trust Department of the bank, that Mr. Padgett was elevated to the position of Vice President in charge of Community Affairs. Solving the parking lot problem involved a period of approximately two months, but upon its completion we received our building permit. We were now approaching the fall of 1974 and the next 6 months were to prove an extremely busy and trying time for NABA's management and its Building Committee.

In November, 1974 our President submitted formal requests for grants of \$100,000 each to two large local foundations. As a result, the Executive Directors of these two foundations began an extensive investigation of NABA in order to submit recommendations to their Board of Trustees for a decision. During this period Mr. Padgett was quite active with some of his acquaintances who were trustees of the two foundations that we had petitioned. On several occasions he brought some of these gentlemen to NABA so that they could see the work that was being done and the crowded conditions that existed and the obvious need for expanded facilities to be of more help to more people.

On December 9, 1974 a contract was signed with McDonough Construction Company and work was begun on the expansion. On December 23 we received a formal letter that one of the foundations had approved

our request for a \$100,000 grant. The grant was to be transmitted to the Metropolitan Foundation of Atlanta for their transfer to us as needed to take care of construction costs. This was quite a Christmas present for the NABA Club at this particular period.

Our enthusiasm however was short-lived because within a matter of a few weeks we received the disappointing news that our request for a grant from the other foundation had been rejected. This foundation was the one that had granted us \$20,000 on the original building. It turned out that its requirements for a grant of this size were quite rigid, and it was pointed out to us that their Board of Trustees had felt that we had not met some of these requirements and the grant had to be rejected.

As has been demonstrated before, setbacks, disappointments, roadblocks were nothing new to us and we again set about doing something about it. In conferences with the Executive Director of this particular foundation he told us that while a resubmission by us was permitted, that historically such resubmissions were rejected. In other words, at this point we received nothing but discouragement. The Executive Director was advised by our management that we intended to correct all situations that were outlined by his foundation and that we intended to resubmit the request. It was apparent to us that the foundation's Board of Trustees and the Executive Director were not fully aware of the accomplishments and the contributions of NABA's membership since its beginning and the difficulties that were overcome by them in creating the original building. To accomplish this education, it entailed several weeks of constant contact with the Executive Director and some of the Trustee members. As you can imagine, our advisers were quite active in this endeavor. In the meantime, however, construction was continuing and we could see that additional funds were going to be needed to meet payments to our contractor and avoid construction work being brought to a standstill.

In April of 1975 two of our members co-signed a short-term note with the Trust Company Bank for \$96,000. Prior to signing this note, however, we felt we had rectified NABA's deficiencies as outlined by the foundation and we were confident that NABA's position in the eyes of the trustees was much clearer and deserving of their consideration. Our President submitted to their Executive Director a formal request but this time the amount of money requested was \$106,000 instead of the original \$100,000. Documented evidence was transmitted to the foundation justifying the additional money required. Bear in mind that at this time and during the past few months, construction was underway and the NABA Club was in a state of turmoil what with the renovation of parts of the original building and the beginning of the new one.

In spite of this confusion, NABA continued to operate on a make-shift basis. AA meetings were continuing. Our kitchen was serving food as best it could under the circumstances, and there was always plenty of coffee. One important factor in the original thinking of this expansion was that it was inevitable that the

membership would be substantially increased. Even in the early stages of the building's design the membership had increased to well over 100 members.

By the 28th of July, 1975 we were formally notified of the welcome news that our \$106,000 grant request had been approved. Our persistence and determination, together with the great help of Mr. Padgett, had paid off. We were now able to clear the loan from the Trust Company Bank and finish the building. Our building contract with McDonough Construction Company was on a cost plus basis, not to exceed \$210,000. But this was not the total amount of money expended. The final architect's fee that was paid amounted to \$7,052 which was far below the going rate for architect's services on a project of this size. We were again indebted to the architectural firm of Wise, Simpson, Aiken & Associates for the fine job that they did for us and their financial leniency.

A kitchen of substantial size was built in the new addition and equipped with new, modern equipment. This was separate and apart from the building contract and the cost amounted to \$22,000, which was a discounted price by a local kitchen equipment firm. We found it necessary to have the contractor complete certain other renovations and adjustments of the old building, together with a few in the new building, which amounted to some \$8,000 which was over and above the contract price. Also, bear in mind that we expended \$18,000 on the expanded parking area. You add all this together and you come up with a total expenditure of some \$265,000. We had now increased the size of our facility a little in excess of 11,000 square feet, which was more than double the square footage of the original building.

One of the significant features of this new building was the installation of a modern partitioning system in the large meeting room that was created on the main floor. The quality of the partitioning system was the best that could be found and was extremely sound resistant. It enabled us to create four sizable meeting rooms and could be adjusted to accommodate some 300 people for special meeting occasions, dances, and other types of entertainment. Our Decorating Committee went to work on the entire building and from the looks of it you might think we had called in professionals. Two recreational rooms were built, one to house two pool tables, and one for ping pong equipment. Both of these areas are utilized extensively every day. Our kitchen was put into operation and full food service was now being enjoyed by everyone.

The years of 1974 and 1975 were the critical years in the construction of our new building. The officers and directors of NABA during this period are to be commended for their dedication and sacrifice of time from their jobs and families in meeting the many crucial situations. The correspondence between foundations, the contractor, suppliers, local contributors, etc. was very voluminous, and exacting records had to be kept.

The dedication of the new NABA building was held on September 9, 1975 exactly 10 years after the dedication of our original building. It was a gala event with a delicious dinner and all the proper tributes and

ceremonies. The underlying theme, however, in this dedication was that of thankfulness for those who had contributed so much to bring it about, but above all, it was thankfulness to our God for His guidance in the past and for what we knew would be His guidance in the future of our efforts in rehabilitating the still sick alcoholic.

NABA had now reached a point in its growth where there had to be drastic changes in its operation. Due to its size and additional square footage, members themselves could no longer keep the premises clean with small committees. It was necessary to hire a cleaning firm to do this job adequately, which was most important. We had installed a 20-ton heating and air conditioning unit to take care of the new building and supplement the old system for the original building. As you can imagine, our utilities bill went up considerably. There were many other items of expense which increased our cost of operation, and while the monthly membership contributions from the increased membership helped a great deal, it was necessary to raise this monthly contribution to a total of \$12.00 per member. This figure was still being set at an absolute minimum, because the aim of management was still to receive just enough money each month to meet expenses and keep the doors open for those to come.

Here we were with a beautiful well-equipped new building but what was it doing for people with a drinking problem as we had planned from the beginning. This was the gratifying part because things were happening fast at NABA with people. Our membership was steadily increasing. There were more and more visitors from out-of-town, particularly traveling men, who were proclaiming NABA to be the finest [club] in the country. The young people coming into NABA was amazing. As we had planned, they now had their own meeting quarters and several meetings at the Club per week were [and still are] held by young people. Our Entertainment Committee authorized their social get-togethers and dances on many Saturday nights and holidays. Many of them gathered at the Club each day socially for lunch or dinner in the evening. At the present time, there are some 25 AA meetings held at the NABA Club each week. There are periods in each day when our parking facilities are taxed to the limit. Hardly a day passes when some man or woman member of NABA has not brought in a visitor with a drinking problem seeking help.

It has been pointed out before that we speak from time to time about the number of NABA members but it is very important to remember that this does not and never has measured the number of men and women it has helped rehabilitate over these 20 years [1957-1977]. There has never been any way to keep track of this figure, but we know without question that it numbers in the thousands.

NABA has made its facilities available to some local alcoholic hospitals and state and county operated clinics. Men and women are brought from these facilities to NABA at specified times during each week, where they hold supervised meetings, have lunch, and are given the opportunity of communicating with other alcoholics and of obtaining a much broader view of what is involved in the recovery from this illness. It also enables them to experience a refreshing change from what they have experienced over a good many years of drinking.

So here we are in 1977, after 20 years – a beautiful building – a membership which now exceeds 300 people – our leaders working hard each day to keep the doors open for the sick alcoholic, and witnessing men and women gaining strength from each other to become useful citizens and leading normal lives without alcohol.

If someone should ask, “Where does NABA go from here?” The answer would have to be that we don’t know about tomorrow, but we will deal with today. Challenges and periods of crisis will confront us but as they have in the past, but we will deal with them as they come. Many times we have looked back and taken stock of what’s around us and wondered how did all of this happen? Sure, hard work and sacrifice has been demonstrated by many people over a long period of time, but underlying it all was faith and prayers to God, so when all is said and done it is proper to say a miracle happened [on Briarwood Road].

(La Fin)

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